

Hoarding Policy

1.0 Purpose of policy

1.1 This document sets out the approach to be taken by staff when dealing with hoarding.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is:

- To recognise if a customer is hoarding.
- To engage and work with the customer to reduce their hoarding behaviour.
- To safeguard individuals and communities.
- To protect our assets.

1.3 This policy must be read in conjunction with the anti-social behaviour policy and associated documents.

2.0 Objectives

2.1 The approach taken in this document aims to balance the rights of the customer with our duty to tackle issues that are a health and safety concern. We will work with partner agencies, where appropriate. This includes subcontractors as well as support agencies and statutory services. As described in the section above, our objectives are:

- To recognise if a customer is hoarding.
- To engage and work with the customer to reduce their hoarding behaviour.
- To safeguard individuals and communities.
- To protect our assets.

3.0 Policy detail

3.0 What is compulsive hoarding?

- 3.1 Compulsive hoarding means excessively collecting items that are of little or no value and not being able to throw them away, resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter.
- 3.2 People with hoarding difficulties may suffer from other mental health issues, which may or may not be directly connected to their hoarding behaviour. Hoarding can also often be associated with anxiety and depression.
- 3.3 Hoarding has been classified as a mental health disorder.
- 3.4 The customer may view their behaviour as a lifestyle choice, and to some extent this is the case.
- 3.5 Hoarding characteristics:
- The acquisition of and failure to discard possessions that appear to be of little use or value.
 - Living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed.
 - Significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by hoarding.

4.0 What kinds of things do people hoard?

- 4.1 Most often, people hoard common possessions, such as paper (e.g. letters, newspapers), books, clothing and containers (e.g., boxes, paper and plastic bags). Some people hoard rubbish or rotten food. More rarely, people hoard animals or human waste products.

5.0 Why is compulsive hoarding a problem?

- 5.1 Due to the amount of clutter, the customer may not be able to use the rooms in their home for their intended purpose, or even be able to sit in a chair without having to move things.
- 5.2 In extreme cases the piles of clutter can become a fire risk, and could result in the customer tripping and falling. Because the home is virtually impossible to clean, living conditions tend to be very unhygienic and can lead to rodent or insect infestations, blocked drains and other problems that may also affect neighbouring properties.
- 5.3 A customer may be reluctant or unable to have visitors, or even allow Karbon Property Services in to carry out essential repairs.
- 5.4 Hoarding may literally take over a person's life, causing their work performance, personal hygiene and social life to suffer.
- 5.5 To summarise, hoarding becomes a problem when it negatively impacts on the customer's life or on others. For example, action needs to be taken when:

- It is associated with self neglect or safeguarding concerns.
- It is contributing to a pest control issue.
- It has health and safety implications.
- The organisation is being hindered from carrying out a statutory duty (e.g. annual gas safety check).

5.6 Our staff must remain objective and should avoid making judgments on the resident's living conditions. Instead, the focus should be on the property as an asset, whether the room(s) can be used for the intended purpose and whether there are health and safety implications.

5.7 We recognise that each case is different, in terms of the type and extent of items hoarded, the risk, and the reasons behind the hoarding. We therefore use a combination of intervention and enforcement measures, including support to tackle the hoarding. In doing this, we will take a multi-agency approach, where appropriate. Ultimately if the hoarding behaviour continues and is a health and safety risk we will take legal action in line with the terms of the tenancy agreement or lease.

6.0 Identification of Hoarding

6.1 Any member of staff who has concerns that a customer may be hoarding, should report this to the Customer Relationship Team or Housing Management team (if they know who the relevant Housing Management team is) within 1 working day.

6.2 If a Customer Relationship Advisor receives the report they must then inform the relevant housing management team within 1 working day.

6.3 External contractors should raise the concern with their staff contact who will then report the potential problem within 1 working day.

6.4 Other situations where hoarding behaviour may be identified include:

- Complaints or concerns registered by a neighbour (pests, smells, unusual behaviour).
- Information from a statutory agency.
- Where a concern about a garden raises a concern about the condition of the property.

6.5 Action will then be taken to investigate. The accompanying procedure document and appendices contain guidance for our staff on what to do to tackle hoarding.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

7.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years. The review will be brought forward if there are significant changes to good practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

7.2 The Executive Director of Customer Services is responsible for delegating the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy.

7.3 We will consult with tenants/staff regarding this policy wherever this is appropriate.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

8.1 This policy is implemented in line with the Group's Equality and Diversity Policy and associated legislation. Consideration will be given to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

8.2 This policy and associated documents are available in different languages and alternative formats where necessary.

9.0 Data Protection and Privacy

9.1 We have a clear policy on data protection and sharing data with other partners/third parties under the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. This is clearly set out in the Data Protection Policy for the Karbon Homes Group which in association with the Data Protection Procedures must be followed throughout the operation of this policy.

10.0 References

- Hoarding Procedure and associated appendices.
- Tenancy Agreement.
- Tenants Handbook/sign-up pack.
- ASB Policy.